

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 NIC-01 IO-14 OMB-01 MC-02 ACDA-19

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /153 W

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R 151238Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 412

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 0130

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, CE

SUBJ: SRI LANKA OPPOSITION LEADER ALLEGES PLOTTING

TO SEIZE POWER FROM MRS. BANDARANAIKE

1. OPPOSITION LEADER J.R. JAYEWARDENE CREATED STIR ON JAN 10 WHEN HE TOLD NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY (NSA) OF "PLANS OF A REVOLUTIONARY GROUP" TO SEIZE POWER. IN SUBSEQUENT PRESS STATEMENT JAYEWARDENE IDENTIFIED LT. COL ANURUDDHA RATWATTE OF SRI LANKA ARMY AND DEPUTY PLANNING MINISTER RATNA DESHAPRIYA SENANAYAKE, TOGETHER WITH FACTIONS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT, INCLUDING "YOUNGER MP'S" AND "SOMAW" ARMED FORCES AND POLICE PERSONNEL, AS MEMBERS OF GROUP. RATWATTE IS MRS. B'S COUSIN, WHILE SENANAYAKE IS PROMINENT EXPONENT OF PRO-CHINA POLICY. BOTH PM'S FAMILY AND ULTRA-LEFT HAVE BEEN LONG-STANDING TARGETS OF OPPOSITION CRITICISM.

2. JAYEWARDENE'S SCENARIO PROJECTED ASSASSINATION OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND INCITEMENT OF PUBLIC DISORDER BTO BE CLAIMED BY TAKE-OVER OF POWER "IN STAGES". WHILE MRS. B WOULD BE KICKED UPSTAIRS TO PRESIDENCY, ALREADY PICKED "REVOLUTIONARY CABINET" WOULD ASSUME EFFECTIVE POWER. JAYEWARDENE CALLED ON PM TO LAUNCH

INQUIRY INTO HIS CHARGES; "OTHERWISE YOU CAN KEEP QUIET AND
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BE ASSASSINATED."

3. ALTHOUGH THERE EXISTS VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS DISBELIEF IN J. R.'S ALLEGATIONS, WHICH HAVE BEEN REPEATED IN LESS DRAMATIC FORM OVER PAST YEAR, PM FOLLOWED UP OVER WEEKEND BY REQUESTING J.R. TO PROVIDE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE AND ANNOUNCING HER INTENTION TO CONDUCT INVESTIGATION. WITH HOT POTATO QUICKLY BA*K IN HIS HANDS, JAYEWARDENE HAS PLEADED FOR TIME TO ASSEMBLE MATERIAL AND FOR NON-PARTISAN SELECT COMMITTEE OF NSA TO CONSIDER HIS CHARGES.

4. COMMENT: ONE COMMON REACTION IS THAT J.R. IS TOO SMART TO MAKE UNFOUNDED CHARGES. THIS IS MOST THAT PUBLIC OPINION APPEARS READY TO CONCEDE AND UNLESS JAYEWARDENE PRESENTS EVIDENCE SOON, HE WILL FIND HIMSELF OPEN TO FRONTAL ATTACK FROM UNITED FRON. WE UNDERSTAND J.R. HAS DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE OF GOVERNMENT MISUSE OF POWER AT ATTANAGALLE, WHICH HE WILL SEEK TO USE TO DISCREDIT ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF PM'S FAMILY AND FAR LEFT, BUT HE WILL HAVE DIFFICULT TIME EQUATING SUCH EVIDENCE WITH

DETAILED CHARGES OF "COUP" PLOTTING AGAINST PM.

5. AIRGRAM FOLLOWS.
VAN HOLLEN

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